

Oral history with 73 year old female, Boise, Idaho (Transcription)

ICA 002-W130 <unintelligible text> Donnelly, ID---9/5/81 <unintelligible text> Boise, ID---
Also present are <unintelligible text> wife, <unintelligible text>---<unintelligible text> and
two of their children. Finnish-American folklife

21 Both <unintelligible text> parents came from Finland (she was born in Idaho)

61 Her husband was also born in Finland

67 Her mother spun and wove

79 Sauna--"A lot of them had saunas here too."

*88 Neither parent spoke English well. Did she find it difficult when she went to school? "I
sure did, because I couldn't understand one thing the teacher said."

94 There were almost more Finnish than American pupils in her school

*100 Ray: The population was 50-50 Finnish to Americans in Long Valley. He says the
Finns came to Long Valley because it reminded them of "the Finnish country itself." This
was based on a misapprehension: their first winter here was unusually mild. "But then the
second winter turned out to be a normal winter, and they lost a lot of livestock, and stuff
because they didn't . . . prepare for it." No forage.

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118 Ray talks about how the men would go mine in Wyoming (coal) during the winter - made it difficult for the women

128 I ask about the 1903 Wyoming coal mine disaster. <unintelligible text> "All I know was that Grandma <unintelligible text> first husband was killed in that mine bomb." (Her sister's mother-in-law).

*152 She does not have a sauna, though her parents had one. Two rooms, a log cabin. Heat rocks. Disc. of procedure for making steam. How long did people stay in the sauna? 10 or 15 minutes. Some men stayed in "for half an hour or longer, maybe."

*167 I ask why people had sauna. Makes you feel clean -tingly feeling.

*176 All seasons, each Saturday. Family, neighbors.

*180 <unintelligible text> brings up the matter of dry vs wet heat. Wet washcloth over nose. Whether to keep the fire going after the water is applied.

215 Coffee and sweet roll /NIESU?? --sp/ Cardamom seed. Finns are famous for this.

232 How <unintelligible text> makes NIESU- regular cinnamon roll recipe, cardamom added. Topping of sugar and water (glaze).

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244 Coffee: She talks about how shepherd coffee used to be clarified with an egg. She prefers a clear coffee. Modern coffeemakers do fine.

<unintelligible text>cont'd.--page 2

254 <unintelligible text> puts salt in her coffee to bring out the flavor. <unintelligible text> says salt takes out the bitter flavor. He puts salt in restaurant coffee to cut down the bitterness. <unintelligible text> talks about shepherd coffee. Don't let it boil. Let the grounds settle.

27? I ask re Finns vs Americans in Long Valley (language groups -hostility, threat)

*293 <unintelligible text> "I think the Finns were kind of put down at first."

*297 <unintelligible text> talks about this. His first language was Finnish. "In school we had a lot of Finnish kids, and if we ever wanted to get even with any of the English-speaking, well, we'd just talk in Finnish and mention their name, and they'd know they were being talked about. And talk about getting upset, now. If they could tell that you were talkin about em but they couldn't tell what you were talkin about, . . ./chuckles/

*332 He talks about how the two languages were combined. Story: His father's cousin came from Finland. She didn't understand the combination, nor would an English speaker have understood it. "You had to be a Long Valley Finn to understand what he said." I ask if it was called "Finglish," and he says yes. After some hesitation he gives an example of it. The last word in it was "anyway," which means "anyway."

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*380 How the old-timers drank coffee: with a sugar cube. <unintelligible text> says it was held between the teeth,<unintelligible text> insists it was placed in the cheek--<unintelligible text> says he's seen them do it both ways. The coffee would be saucered and sipped through the sugar. <unintelligible text> says doing it that way would make the sugar go too fast (between the teeth)--the cheek's better. <unintelligible text> says saucering was the most important thing anyway /laughter/.

400 Both men and women drank their coffee that way.<unintelligible text> says today when the coffee is too hot she will saucer it. No longer uses sugar, for health reasons.

415 <unintelligible text> mentions stories about antagonisms between Finns and Americans in school. "They always seemed to put them down. Even the teachers, and it was hard on them in school, and she would punish the Finn children if they didn't do what she told them, and it was usually because they didn't understand what she said."

448 I ask <unintelligible text> about this -in his generation they knew enough English to understand the teachers. (Ray is 47.) At that point the ratio of Finns to Americans was no longer 50-50. Phonics helped <unintelligible text>

*470 The English speakers would deride the Finns in <unintelligible text> generation, to the extent that <unintelligible text> became ashamed to bring his mother's Finn bread to school (as opposed to "store-boughten white bread").

490 End of side 1

<unintelligible text>, cont'd.---page 3

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*03 I ask <unintelligible text> about her school experience. (Finnish speaker.) "Well, it was awful hard. I don't know how I learned to do anything that the teacher said. I learned to read, but I didn't know what I was readin." (More about being able to pronounce words only, taking tests purely by guessing.) Sometimes the other "Finn kids" helped her in school.

24 I ask re derogatory terms. <unintelligible text> doesn't remember any, nor does <unintelligible text>.

38 How'about "Finlanders"? She says they didn't like it because they were born in the United states.

*47 Their teacher forbade them to speak Finnish. <unintelligible text>: "So we'd go around the corner and whisper."

55 She always spoke Finnish with her husband.

*63 <unintelligible text> talks about Finn attitudes towards the Americans. Finns were skilled craftsmen and looked down on "the English-speaking people."

*90 <unintelligible text> "The Finnish people take pride in their work."

*95 A Finnish eso. name for the English speakers: "The Other-Tongues." <unintelligible text> gives the term in Finnish too). Both <unintelligible text> and <unintelligible text> chuckle a bit.

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105 Discussion of Finnish-style folk housing in Long Valley. <unintelligible text> doesn't know if any is left. <unintelligible text> mentions differences in the individual styles of Finnish craftsmen. His father worked with round logs, for example, while others hewed the logs "to make it look modern." There were also differences in corner-notching. Log curing. Ray knows how to notch logs, and has seen his father using a broad-axe.

140 <unintelligible text> husband was 26 years older than she, having been born in 1881. His youngest child was born when he was over 70.

180 Re <unintelligible text> mother's yarn-spinning. <unintelligible text> describes the process a little. She and other children would gather wool off barbed-wire fences. Washing, carding, spinning. The spinning wheel her mother used may have been borrowed from a neighbor.

203 <unintelligible text> herself tried it but didn't like it.

220 The wool was used for making knitted stockings and batts for tied quilts (not for making rugs, as I had supposed. The rugs <unintelligible text> mother made and <unintelligible text> herself has made were loomed; the ones on <unintelligible text>'s floor looked just like, say, Mormon loomed rugs to me).

232 <unintelligible text> The Finnish Ladies' Aid knitted colorful socks to sell at the Annual Auction.

255 I ask re specifically Finnish handwork, e.g., embroidery. <unintelligible text> doesn't know of any.

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<unintelligible text>, cont'd.---page 4

265 The goods sold at the auction are embroidered on pre-stamped cloth.

274 When <unintelligible text> was a child, <unintelligible text> showed him how to crochet. He used this skill to make "tire chains" for his toy truck.

285 <unintelligible text> is quite handy. She and her husband re-did their home's interior and added two rooms over the years. She made wooden Christmas toys for her children.

301 She has lived in this same house since 1929.

315 Long Valley settlement pattern--in waves? People are still coming from Finland.

329 Her husband homesteaded the property and built the house.

348 I ask <unintelligible text> about singing. Her parents didn't sing, but her husband did. He used to sing (in Finnish) a long song about the sinking of the Titanic. <unintelligible text> doesn't know if he made it up or not. (He did compose some songs.) <unintelligible text> can't remember much about his father's singing.

380 <unintelligible text> cousin who lives in Boise in the winter and in Donnelly in the summer, knows other family lore.

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417 I ask for an important childhood memory related to her being Finnish. Nothing comes forth.

440 She does not recall being mistreated for being Finnish.

454 End of formal interview. Taking pictures

460 Discussion of the Finnish practice of serving beverages to company. <unintelligible text> thinks Finns are sometimes susceptible to alcohol. He says English speakers assume Finns are heavy drinkers.

493 End of tape.